DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 084 464 CG 008 454

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TITLE Preparing Today's Child for Tomorrow's World Through Better Use of Community Resources.
PUB DATE Oct 73
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the International Conference of Pupil Personnel Workers (New Orleans, Louisiana, October 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Community Cooperation; *Community Resources; Interagency Cooperation; Pupil Personnel Workers; *School Community Cooperation; *School Community Relationship; *Social Responsibility; *Student Development

ABSTRACT

The interdependence of the school and other community institutions is viewed as undergirding the school's primary function of helping children acquire competence in meeting their life tasks and in adapting creativity to change. First, community conditions may impinge upon a child's capability, and freedom to learn. It is argued that instructional inputs highly incongruous with prior experiences of disadvantaged children disrupt sequential learning. Identification by pupil personnel workers of target groups of pupils presenting a cluster of interrelated problems and community strains can lead to interventive strategies of pimary prevention. Collaboration between schools and other community agencies is also viewed as contributing to preparation of students to assume social responsibility as adult citizens. The third aspect of interdependence relates to collaboration in behalf of individual children experiencing difficulty in school, stressing the necessity for involvement of parents and children in referrals to community agencies, security in one's professional role and respect for the contributions of others, and issues in group deliberation and planning. Pupil personnel workers must give effective leadership within both school and community to enhance children's motivation and opportunities to learn. (Author/CJ)

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Presented at International Conference of Pupil Personnel Workers, October, 1973

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# Preparing Today's Child for Tomorrow's World Through Better Use of Community Resources

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The better use of community resources to complement school and home resources has been delineated as the fourth task to achieve the goal of preparing today's child for tomorrow's world. The term "better use of community resources" implies some dissatisfaction with current practices. Although pupil personnel workers and staff members of community agencies share the goals of fostering the healthy development of children's capabilities, there has not been as significant coordination of activities or as effective interaction between schools and community agencies as would be desirable.

Perhaps one of the problems has been difficulty in communication. I am reminded of the story of the beautiful adolescent who was a lover of jazz and a rabid collector of records. She made a habit of calling a particular record shop to inquire about the availability of the latest hits she heard. One day when dialing, she was in such a hurry that she picked the wrong last number. This error connected her with the feed store. Without introduction the girl asked familiarly, "Do you have Two Hot Lips and Six Warm Kisses?" There was a slight silence at the other end. Then the feed store attendant, deciding this was a gag, replied, "No, but we have two tom cats and six new kittens." "Is that a record," asked the girl. "We think it is", was the reply.

Several constraints appear to have limited the effective intermeshing of efforts to achieve mutual goals. Both schools and community agencies have been under severe attack in recent years. Both have been subjected to much criticism of their effectiveness in meeting today's needs. The reduced

public confidence has led to both financial and political crises for both groups. As both faced accusations and recriminations and sought to develop innovative responses, internal dissensions occurred with at times even polarization on issues and desirable actions. A further complication relates to the ambiguity of community expectations of both groups. Schools frequently are expected not only to correct all deficiencies in education but also to serve as society's instruments in coping with problems as delinquency and teenage pregnancies. In similar vein, community social agencies are expected to eradicate such problems as poverty, racism, and drug addiction when in reality these problems require political and economic action as well as interdisciplinary efforts. Even when community expectations are consistent with realistic functions of schools and community agencies, the personnel of both systems may be criticized for their inability to produce at optimum levels when the problem is inadequate community support. Such climates are not conductive to developing collaborative relationships and activities.

A further constraint arises from the somewhat differing perspectives of the two groups. Even though both groups hold similar value orientations, the school system in recent years has been subjected to considerable pressure from special interest groups, ethnic minority groups, and politicians with the result that universalism became a major ideological theme.[2] The impact of universalism in standardizing curricula and in establishing formulas of specific ratios of pupils to teachers to specialists restricted the system's flexibility in adapting to special needs. It lessened the potential of individualization of children.

Another constraint is created by the bureaucratic rigidities under which both systems frequently operate. There is the well-known law of animal behavior which has been applied to institutional behavior: "Under carefully controlled conditions, organisms behave as they damn well please." David Street cites the case of the probation officer who battled the continuation school for permission for his adolescent client not to jeopardize the only

steady job he ever held by taking off time to attend school once a week.[3] And pupil personnel workers could cite many examples of rigidity of agency regulations which rendered a client ineligible for needed services or resulted in serious delay of services at a point of crisis. Both professional groups at times have been criticized for inadequacies about which they could do little because policy control and the decision-making power were vested in other than the professional staff. Concerned over their own frustrations in achieving optimum goals, neither group has been able to invest the necessary time and effort to gain adequate appreciation of the innovations attempted by the other. Consequently each system may have unrealistic expectations of the other with subsequent experiencing of disappointment in enlisting cooperation. Repeated disappointments sometimes lead to estrangement rather than to intelligent contact.

Despite these constraints, pupil personnel workers and staffs of community agencies appreciate that they have both shared goals and some common knowledge. Equally important is their realization that each group has particular competencies and differing perspectives. Understanding of the overlap and the differences in goals and abilities should improve collaboration. If we can liberate ourselves from parochial concerns and the rhetoric of complaint, if we can surrender our defensiveness and jealous guarding of our respective turfs and boundaries, we are free to learn from each other in the mutual exploration of linkages and relationships. The stimulation of ideas can result in cognitive gains and increased gratification from the commitment to a larger goal and the spirit of cooperative planning. Ideally, collaboration between pupil personnel workers and community agencies constitutes an orchestration of professional talents and community resources in behalf of client needs. Even thought at times solos are rendered by a particular member, the major effect of the orchestration is a blending of the instruments to produce a harmony and compelling intensity of delight which no one instrument alone could evoke.

A basic premise of this paper is our appreciation of the school as a

social institution which can be understood only in terms of its interdependence with other community institutions - the welfare system, family counseling and child care agencies and institutions, clinics and hospitals, courts, churches, and recreational and character-building agencies. As Vogel, Zepper, and Bachelor state in their recent book on Foundations of Education, "Schools are . . . an important and integral part of the communities that support them; changes in the community are directly felt in the activities of the school and the problems of the community are unavoidably school problems. (A point educational theorists sometimes overlook.)"[4]

The thrust of this paper is that the interdependence of the school and other community institutions undergirds in several ways the school's primary function of helping children acquire competence in meeting their life tasks and in adapting creatively to change. First, the child's optimum use of school opportunities may be influenced by community conditions which impinge upon his freedom and capability to learn. Second, the school alerted to these factors may be a potent force in stimulating community concern and action to improve social conditions. Third, the school frequently can enlist the help of community resources in behalf of the troubled child.

Let us examine each of these premises in relation to the tasks and contributions of the pupil personnel worker. Community conditions may impinge upon a child's freedom and capability to learn. A multitude of studies have demonstrated that a child's ability to learn and his use of school may be hampered by the consequences of over-crowded and inadequate housing, of poverty and the concomitant economic and cultural deprivation, of poor nutrition, of membership in disadvantaged minority groups, and of inadequate medical facilities.[5] Realization that the impact of community conditions is a depressant of the child's ability to learn should not become simply a substitute for the earlier notions that educational limitations were biologically determined. Today's theories of environmental disability cannot be complacently

accepted as explaining the educational retardation of disadvantaged children. Neither should these theories result in teachers becoming so sympathetic to these children that they lower their standards, and as Street suggests, love their pupils rather than teaching them. Even more serious is the possibility that defeatist attitudes toward these children are adopted by some school personnel. Can children be taught effectively and stimulated to learn, when as Kenneth Clark queries in his challenging book, Dark Ghetto, their teachers do not believe these children can learn, "do not expect that they can learn, and do not act toward them in ways that help them to learn."[6] There appears to be common acceptance of the concept that many disadvantaged children and their parents have low self-esteem and little hope of improving their lot. More recently there is growing recognition that self-esteem is linked to the attitudes of others and the opportunities society affords. If school personnel lower their expectations of these students, self-fulfilling prophecies result. If poorer quality of performance is accepted as the norm and stimulation to develop one's capabilities is not provided, self-defeating attitudes are encouraged. Willie challenges that such phrases as "poor motivation", "low aspirational level" or "drop-outs" are "camouflaging verbiage that cover up the poor effort of the adult affluent society to reach out to deprived youth."[7] Some theorists today hold that the quality of intellect is a function of interaction between the individual as a living system and other social systems. These interactionist theorists believe that "motivational and attitudinal factors are experientially determined and experientially modified."[8] Such concepts lead then to the suggestion that children will respond to motivating experiences offered in good faith and with belief in the intrinsic capacity for growth and change within each human being. The teaching must begin, however, when the children are in experience and readiness. Gordon, in expounding Hebb's and Hunt's Incongruity-Dissonance Principle contended that motivation and attitude are "the products of current sensory inputs interacting with

residuals of earlier experience."[9] Inputs which are highly incongruous with earlier experiences disrupt sequential organization of learning. On the other hand, slight degrees of incongruity lend interest and are stimulating. Negative attitudes and lack of motivation are regarded as resulting from environmental encounters which are grossly incongruous with the residuals of prior experience. When the integrative task greatly exceeds the integrative capabilities of the individual, hope of achieving is diminished.

The pupil personnel worker is in a favorable position to assist the faculty in identifying the prior experiences and the interacting environmental forces influencing its student population. New stimuli and learning opportunities then can be appropriately and congruently related to prior and current life situations in order to enhance the student's motivation. The same principles should lead to discriminating modifications of curricula for gifted children so that they feel excitingly involved and stimulated to think independently. The pupil personnel worker from his knowledge of the community can also help school personnel develop awareness of possible differences in value orientations of teachers and students and their parents. Experience has demonstrated that differing value orientations can lead to problems in communication and to inaccurate interpretations of behavior.

It has become increasingly difficult for principals and teachers to keep abreast of community conditions influencing their students because of the rapid changes occurring in so many neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods are in a period of transition; others are rapidly developing; still others may have deteriorated. The patterns of achieving desegregation within a school system, and especially the practice of bussing, have led to school populations frequently coming from several communities which may differ as to socio-cultural values, economic conditions, and accessibility of resources. Even for the pupil personnel worker who is in closer contact with the neighborhoods in which the pupils live, it may not be easy to secure adequate knowledge of

community conditions and attitudes with which the students interact. Here is an area in which planned use of community agencies might result in school personnel securing pertinent knowledge of specific environmental factors limiting children's freedom to learn. The pupil personnel worker can serve as an intermediary between the school and other community agencies. A viable partnership can be developed in which community agencies and schools share their knowledge and experiences. A positive gain for the school could be better understanding by community agencies of the school's problems and programs. A closer partnership between schools and community agencies could result in more widespread support of the education system's efforts to cope effectively with the changing demands made upon it.

Such a partnership with community agencies would expedite the pupil personnel worker's assumption of the primary prevention role. His contributions thus would be broadened from the one-to-one interaction with students to a broader perspective of the school interacting with other social systems to effect both systemic changes and community improvements. In addition to helping individual children, the pupil personnel worker would give leadership to identifying target groups of pupils who present a cluster of inter-related problems with resulting strains and failure in the school situation. The planning and interventive strategies then can focus on the interaction of community systems of which a child's personal problem may be but one manifestation. Open communication and united efforts by community agencies, school personnel, and parents might more readily result in planned systemic change.

A viable partnership between the school and community agencies thus would serve to identify limiting community conditions. The pupil personnel worker, in addition, could be the catalyst in developing concerted efforts by parents, school personnel, and community agencies to undertake the actions required to improve environmental conditions, develop new resources, and main-

tain an orderly process of planned change. The pupil personnel worker knows the indigenous leaders in the parent group and often can encourage their joining forces with school personnel and community groups. A recent two year project in four schools in Oklahoma demonstrated the benefits of coordinated activity of schools, community agencies, and parents.[10] Three state agencies provided social workers as service coordinators to four elementary school faculties to facilitate referrals to community agencies and to help existing agencies and groups develop needed services. The service coordinators as enablers, advocates, and brokers sought to achieve more effective interaction of community systems for maximum service delivery. School personnel referred children and their families to the coordinators who in turn assisted the families in connecting with appropriate community resources. The coordinators followed up to assess the effectiveness of service and provided feedback to both school personnel and community agencies. Agency representatives were involved in school programs through participation in a teachers' "worry clinic", parent groups and children's counseling groups. School personnel and parents joined community agencies in developing new programs, as for instance, a tutoring program and volunteers to serve as big brothers and sisters. The project director reported that "new patterns of interaction among groups emerged with the result that badly needed services were developed. In the process, the school system opened up to the community and the community, in turn, became more involved in the school and its children."[11]

A further facet of collaboration between schools and community is the involvement of pupils in participation in community programs. In one community the school social worker suggested to teachers how community social workers might assist teachers in preparing children to accept social responsibility. A sixth grade class in a private suburban school became so interested in the welfare worker's discussion of problems faced by families receiving financial assistance that they requested additional sessions in which one activity was examining the budgets on which such families lived. Another class in a middle

class neighborhood which planned to provide Christmas gifts for a brother and sister in foster care became keenly interested in knowing more about programs of substitute family care. A probation officer interested still another sixth grade class in visiting the local detention facilities with the result that these children involved their parents in arousing neighborhood support of the move for more adequate staff and facilities. As the teachers in these schools and the community social workers met together in conducting these programs, keener appreciation of their mutual concerns emerged and more active collaboration in community projects.

This example is but one illustration of how collaboration with community agencies might enlarge the school's opportunities to provide students with reality situations as preparation for assumption of social responsibility in their communities. Such collaboration might also disseminate more widespread knowledge of community resources to which the students' families might turn at an early point in any difficulty.

The third responsibility of the pupil personnel worker related to teamwork with community resources in behalf of the school child whose problems require individualized attention beyond the program and resources of the school.

Teamwork, as practiced by some, resembles the story of the little boy playing in his yard who was asked where his brother was. "Oh, he's in the living room," was the indifferent response. "We were playing a duet but I finished first." Effective case collaboration is dependent upon several factors. Of primary importance is the necessity for engagement of the child's family in definition of the problem focus and in mutual agreement as to the goals sought.

The child and his family must be willing to work on the problem. The goals must be those the client wants to attain, not those to which the professional aspires. Frequently the pupil personnel worker may be under pressure from the school to undertake action to relieve the strains a child's problem

places upon teachers or fellow classmates. In other instances the pupil personnel worker may be reacting to his own sense of pressure to ease the tensions under which a child is operating or to provide badly needed resources. In still other situations the pressure to achieve specific outcomes might come from community persons concerned about the child's behavior or perhaps his neglect. Whatever the source of the pressure to achieve specified changes, the worker must accept that the primary change agent is the client-system, the child and his family. Our experience in the helping process increasingly is turning us away from what has been termed the reformist attitude or in other words, the stance that the professional knows better than the client what the client needs. Granted that sometimes the child and his parents may be unaware of the problem or may be denying the problem and its consequences for the child and the family group. The worker has the responsibility to challenge a narrow, restricted view of the problem or of the changes proposed and to assist the family in considering the range of available options and resources. We share generously and responsibly our knowledge and our experience as these are pertinent to the family's consideration of the problem, its effects, the desired changes, and the necessary steps and tasks by which these changes can be accomplished. But increasingly our experience has demonstrated that the goals of the helping process must be the client's if he is to participate in a meaningful way toward the achievement of those goals. How the client views the problem, how he feels about the problem, and what he wants and is willing to do about the problem are crucial issues.

These considerations frequently pose particular problems for the pupil personnel worker since the majority of requests for service come not from the children or their families but from school personnel. Since the families did not request help and may tend to defend themselves in various ways from coming to grips with the problem, the first task may be to help the family define

the problem as one that is troublesome and with which help is needed. It is not within the scope of this discussion to identify these helping procedures. Pertinent to our discussion, however, is the recognition that the desired goal should be stated in specific and realistically attainable terms and that the referral to the community agency should be seen as an orderly step in the process of goal attainment. The client's readiness for referral is dependent upon his willingness to present his situation to another agency and to request assistance. The pupil personnel worker must be alert to the possibility that the referral may rekindle the client's ambivalence about seeking and using help, his feelings of inadequacy in coping with his problem, and his anxiety as to how this new resource will regard him and his problem. Opportunity to ventilate and examine these feelings and to experience sensitive and accepting responses from the pupil personnel worker may strengthen the family's courage to seek help. Encouraged to express any doubts, fears, and expectations, the client then may be helped to clarify any misconceptions and to disperse fears and anxieties so that he can adequately present his situation. The severely deprived client who has little trust and confidence in others or the depressed, apathetic client whose self-esteem is low may need additional help in exploring their reactions to this new experience. It may be desirable in some such situations that the worker accompany the client to the agency and introduce him to the new worker. In other situations the pupil personnel worker might request the community agency to reach out to a family under such stress that their initiative is limited.

One avenue for involving the client's participation in the referral is the discussion of information that needs to be shared with the community agency, whether by the client or by the pupil personnel worker in initiating any arrangements. The client has the right to know what information is needed and to decide if and how this should be shared. Usually clients are willing to share information if they perceive its relevance to their work with the

community agency. Sometimes the client's reluctance to share information clues us that the client continues to be uncertain as to the desirability of the referral. Further examination of the client's goals and the help needed may be indicated.

Two cautions might be noted in implementing this process of referral to a community agency. Some clients, particularly those whose deprivations have led to little trust in others, may interpret a referral as a rejection, a confirmation that the pupil personnel worker indeed has little interest in, or respect for, the family. Such attitudes not only contribute to lowered self-esteem but also may make it more difficult for the family to engage in a productive partnership with another agency. With such families the pupil personnel worker needs to interpret the referral carefully as indication of concern that the family secure the needed help. The referral may also be presented as tangible evidence of the worker's belief in the family's ability to cope more effectively with the problem, when provided the necessary help.

In our eagerness to enhance the family's motivation to accept referral, the second caution is that we not "oversell" the community resource or commit another agency or professional to a specific course of action unless this has been agreed upon by the representative accepting the referral. The "oversell" or the usurping of another agency's decision-making may result in unrealistic expectations by the client which could negatively influence the initial encounter with the other agency.

It was earlier noted that security in one's professional role is a basic factor in effective teamwork. Such security implies not only conviction as to one's competencies and potential contributions but also comfort in delineating the boundaries of one's knowledge, skill, and function. Without defensiveness, it then is possible to explore what additional resources might be enlisted to enhance the client's capabilities of dealing with his problem. Professional jealousies, vested interests, or competitiveness could lead

to a striving for status, a "pecking order" in a hierarchy of power. On the other hand, security in one's own role coupled with respect for the contributions of others can lead to the development of an interacting partnership whose combined efforts are greater than the sum of the individual contributions.

Group deliberation is still another ingredient of effective collaboration. Free interchange of professional knowledge relevant to understanding and helping the client results in sharpened thinking because of the stimulation collaborators offer each other. Group deliberation may result in a more careful analysis of data than might have been achieved by any one participant. As each collaborator shares thinking and experience from a different perspective, the complex interacting forces may be more readily identified and the scope of realistic considerations widened. As integrated planning is achieved, duplication of efforts is avoided. Gaps in implementation of a plan may be more readily identified to insure more comprehensive action. Coordinated team work can occur only if each collaborator is willing to examine possible areas of overlapping services and to examine which collaborator could be most helpful in offering these services. Personal interests and prominence must be subordinated to the goal of achieving effectiveness as a helping team. Differences in viewpoint need to be subjected to objective and open-minded discussion focused on how the client's goal can best be achieved. Group deliberations should aim for consensus when possible to insure greater confidence in decisions reached. Each collaborator actually carries heavier responsibility in decision-making and its implementation than if he were working alone, for he must relate his role responsibilities and activities to the total plan.

Open and clear communication between collaborators is essential. Should the pupil personnel worker have information that suggests the client is resistive or has a limited perspective, this should be shared with the

community agency before the encounter. The pupil personnel worker can involve the teacher as a member of the team to enlarge the team's understanding and to synchronize efforts.

Any problems that arise in the collaborative process need to be openly discussed. One collaborator may be overly identified with the client and consequently quick to accept uncritically a client's complaints about another helper. Sometimes a collaborator is not sufficiently sensitive to the feelings of others in the timing of his suggestions. If focus can be maintained on the client's goal, problems can be frankly examined from the perspective of what steps are essential to move closer to goal-attainment. Better service, not status, is the concern as school and agency resources and professional talents are combined in behalf of the child and his family.

Better use of community resources is viewed in part, then, as working comfortably with these agencies as team members to provide the individual help that a child and his family may need to maximize his opportunities for productive and enjoyable learning. Over and beyond helping an individual pupil is the obligation to work with community agencies to identify those aspects of community life which impinge on the child's freedom to learn or which diminish his motivation to learn. As pupil personnel workers and social workers in the community band together to arouse community interest and action to alleviate community stresses and strains, many pupils will benefit. Such efforts at primary prevention constitute a new perspective and a need to re-examine and enlarge our responsibilities. The problems attendant upon assuming such responsibilities are many. The constraints that have limited teamwork between pupil personnel workers and community agencies may continue to plague us but it should be possible to achieve constructive collaboration with conviction and commitment. The total commitment that may be involved is illustrated by the story of the pig and the hen walking down the street. They observed a sign in a restaurant window advertising a breakfast of ham and eggs for only

one dollar. "Isn't that beautiful advertising for us", asked the hen. "For you, it's good publicity for your contribution", replied the pig, "but for me, it's total commitment."

Footnotes

[1]For this and the concluding story I am indebted to Edward B. Nyquist, Deputy Commissioner of Education, New York State.

[2]David Street, "Educators and Social Workers: Sibling Rivalry in the Inner City", Social Service Review, XLI (June, 1967), 152-65.

[3]Ibid, p. 153.

[4]Albert W. Vogel, John F. Zepper, and David L. Bachelor, Foundations of Education (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1970), p. 209.

[5]Only a few of these studies are listed. See Martin Deutsch, "The Role of Social Class in Language Development and Cognition", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXV (January, 1965), 78-88; Judith Greenberg and Helen Davidson, "Home Background and School Achievement of Black Urban Ghetto Children", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XLII (October, 1972), 803-10. Jerome Hellmuth, Editor, The Disadvantaged Child, Vol. I & II (New York: Brunner - Mazel, 1968); National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Perspectives on Human Deprivation (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publications, 1968); A. Passow, ed., Education in Depressed Areas (New York: Teachers College Publications, 1963); Norma L. Radin, "Some Impediments to the Education of Disadvantaged Children", Children, XV (September-October, 1968), 171-6; Frank Riessman, Jerome Cohen, and Arthur Pearl, Mental Health of the Poor (New York: Free Press, 1966), Part 2.

[6]Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 109.

[7]Charles V. Willie, "Education, Deprivation, and Alienation", Journal of Negro Education, XXIV (Summer, 1964). p. 216.

[8]Edmund W. Gordan, "Counseling Socially Advantaged Children", Mental Health of the Poor, ed. Riessman, Cohen, and Pearl (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 280.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Harlan Powell, "Community Services Coordination in Elementary Schools", Child Welfare, LI (June, 1973), 383-91.

[11]Ibid.